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CRITICISM OF STALIN IN THE CHINESE MEDIA

1. CHEN WEIDA'S REMARKS ON STALIN IN REF FBIS SEEM TO ACCORD WITH THE PREVAILING LINE ON STALIN'S MERITS AND FAULTS REGARDING THE CLASS STRUGGLE ISSUE SINCE THE THIRD PLENUM THREE YEARS AGO. ON THIS PARTICULAR ISSUE, THEREFORE, WE DO NOT SENSE ANYTHING NEW AFOOT.

2. OVER THE YEARS SINCE KHRUSHCHEV'S "SECRET SPEECH" AT THE 1956 20TH CPSU CONGRESS, CHINESE ASSESSMENTS OF STALIN'S MERITS AND FAULTS CAN BE DIVIDED INTO TWO BROAD, CONFLICTING VIEWPOINTS. EACH OF THESE VIEWPOINTS NATURALLY HAS BEEN INTIMATELY CONNECTED WITH CONTENDING ASSESSMENTS WITHIN THE CCP LEADERSHIP OF THE ROLE OF CLASS STRUGGLE WITHIN CHINA'S SOCIALIST SOCIETY AND WITH FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES IN THE SINO-SOVIET POLEMIC. THE FIRST OF THESE TWO VIEWPOINTS EMERGED IN RESPONSE TO KHRUSHCHEV'S SECRET SPEECH ITSELF AND TO DE-STALINIZATION TRENDS WITHIN THE BLOC AT LARGE. IT WAS CONTAINED MOST AUTHORITATIVELY IN THE TWO LANDMARK PEOPLE'S DAILY EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT ARTICLES "ON THE HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE OF THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT" (5 APRIL 1956) AND "MORE ON THE HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE OF THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT" (29 DECEMBER 1956), BUT ALSO OBLIQUELY IN MAO'S OWN REMARKS OF 27 APRIL 1956, NOW CALLED "ON THE TEN GREAT RELATIONSHIPS." THE ESSENCE OF THIS JUDGMENT WAS THAT STALIN EXAGGERATED THE SHARPNESS OF CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE SOVIET UNION IN THE 1930'S AND THUS "BROADENED THE SCOPE OF SUPPRESSION OF COUNTERREVOLUTION" AND WRONGLY PERSECUTED NUMEROUS PARTY LEADERS AND CADRES IN THE GREAT PURGES.

3. THIS VIEWPOINT, OF COURSE, COINCIDED BOTH WITH THE PREVAILING TREND OF DE-STALINIZATION WITHIN THE COMMUNIST BLOC AT THE TIME AND ALSO WITH THE CCP'S OWN AUTHORITATIVE JUDGMENT THAT THE ROLE OF CLASS STRUGGLE WAS DIMINISHING IN CHINA. LIU SHAOQI'S REPORT TO THE EIGHTH CCP CONGRESS IN SEPTEMBER 1956 HAD DECLARED THAT "THE QUESTION OF WHO WILL WIN IN THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN SOCIALISM AND CAPITALISM IN OUR COUNTRY HAS NOW BEEN DECIDED" WITH THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THE SOCIALIST TRANSFORMATION. THAT VICTORY, LIU STATED, MEANS THAT "THE PERIOD OF REVOLUTIONARY STORM AND STRESS IS PAST" AND THAT "THE AIM OF OUR STRUGGLE IS CHANGED INTO ONE OF SAFEGUARDING THE SUCCESSFUL DEVELOPMENT OF THE FORCES OF PRODUCTION OF SOCIETY, SO THAT A CORRESPONDING CHANGE IN THE METHODS OF STRUGGLE WILL HAVE TO FOLLOW AND A COMPLETE LEGAL SYSTEM BECOMES AN ABSOLUTE NECESSITY."

4. THE OTHER VIEWPOINT ON STALIN EMERGED GRADUALLY OVER THE NEXT DECADE AS MAO CAME EVENTUALLY TO QUESTION THE EIGHTH PARTY CONGRESS LINE ON CLASS STRUGGLE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR CHINA'S APPROACH TO SOCIALIST MODERNIZATION AND THE PARTY'S ROLE IN IT. MAO BELIEVED INCREASINGLY THAT, FAR FROM RECEDING AS CHINESE SOCIALISM ADVANCES, CLASS STRUGGLE ACTUALLY INTENSIFIES AS DISENFRANCHISED REACTIONARY ELEMENTS FROM THE ABOLISHED EXPLOITING CLASSES MAKE LAST-DITCH EFFORTS TO REGAIN POWER AND AS THE CONTINUING CORROSION OF RESIDUAL REACTIONARY IDEOLOGIES COMPROMISES THE REVOLUTIONARY INTEGRITY OF THE PARTY'S LEADERSHIP. PROGRESS IN SOCIALIST SOCIETY, MAO CONCLUDED, REQUIRES THE EVER-SHARPER DRAWING OF CLASS LINES

IN SOCIETY AND MAY ULTIMATELY REQUIRE THE OVERTHROW OF ONCE-REVOLUTIONARY PARTY LEADERS NOW CORRUPTED BY THE SUGAR-COATED BULLETS OF REACTIONARY IDEAS, AND IT NECESSITATES THE ABANDONMENT OF FORMAL PARTY AND STATE INSTITUTIONS, LAWS AND PROCEDURES WHICH MAY RESTRAIN THE PROGRESSIVE AIMS OF THE MASSES AND THEIR ACTIVIST LEADERS.

5. THAT THESIS OF MAO'S, WHICH WAS CALLED THE THEORY OF "CONTINUING THE REVOLUTION UNDER THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT" AND CONSIDERED A PIONEERING CONTRIBUTION TO MARXISM-LENINISM, WAS THE THEORETICAL JUSTIFICATION BOTH FOR HIS INAUGURATION OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION AND FOR THE DIFFERENCES--WHICH HE LED THE WAY IN ELABORATING--BETWEEN THE CCP AND THE CPSU. IT ALSO LED TO A REVISED ASSESSMENT OF STALIN'S MISTAKES. ALTHOUGH MAO ZEDONG WAS ALREADY WELL ON THE WAY TO ELABORATING HIS VIEWS ON CLASS STRUGGLE IN SOCIALIST SOCIETY BY THE EARLY 1960'S (HIS FAMOUS REMARK "NEVER FORGET THE CLASS STRUGGLE" WAS MADE AT THE 1962 10TH PLENUM), AND ALTHOUGH HE HAD CALLED CLASS STRUGGLE THE ESSENCE OF THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE CCP AND CPSU (BOTH IN INTERPRETATION OF BLOC DOMESTIC POLICIES IN PLACES LIKE YUGOSLAVIA AND THE USSR ITSELF, AND IN FOREIGN POLICY THEORY REGARDING THE CONCEPT OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE), THE NEW ASSESSMENT OF STALIN DID NOT EMERGE UNTIL THE HEIGHT OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION. THE 1963 PEOPLE'S DAILY-RED FLAG EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT ESSAY "ON THE QUESTION OF STALIN" (ONE OF THE FAMOUS "NINE COMMENTARIES" COAUTHORED BY MAO, CHEN BODA, AND KANG SHENG) THUS RETAINED THE ORIGINAL 1956 JUDGMENT OF STALIN THAT HE HAD "ENLARGED THE SCOPE OF SUPPRESSION OF COUNTERREVOLUTIONARIES" IN THE GREAT PURGES AS ONE OF HIS MAJOR ERRORS.

6. THE NEW VIEW WAS FIRST EXPOUNDED AUTHORITATIVELY IN 1967, ON THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION'S START, IN AN 18 MAY PEOPLE'S DAILY-RED FLAG EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT ARTICLE. THAT ARTICLE STATED: "STALIN WAS A GREAT MARXIST-LENINIST...BUT WHERE HE FAILED WAS IN NOT RECOGNIZING ON THE LEVEL OF THEORY THAT CLASSES AND CLASS STRUGGLE EXIST IN SOCIETY THROUGHOUT THE HISTORICAL PERIOD OF THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT AND THAT THE QUESTION OF WHO WILL WIN IN THE REVOLUTION HAS YET TO BE FINALLY SETTLED: IN OTHER WORDS, IF ALL THIS IS NOT HANDLED PROPERLY THERE IS A POSSIBILITY OF A COMEBACK BY THE BOURGEOISIE. THE YEAR BEFORE HE DIED, STALIN BECAME AWARE OF THIS POINT AND STATED THAT CONTRADICTIONS DO EXIST IN SOCIALIST SOCIETY AND IF NOT PROPERLY HANDLED MIGHT TURN INTO ANTAGONISTIC ONES. COMRADE MAO ZEDONG HAS GIVEN FULL ATTENTION TO THE WHOLE HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE OF THE SOVIET UNION. HE HAS CORRECTLY SOLVED THIS SERIES OF PROBLEMS IN A NUMBER OF WRITINGS AND INSTRUCTIONS...AND THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT INDICATION THAT MARXISM HAS DEVELOPED TO AN ENTIRELY NEW STAGE." WHERE ACCORDING TO THE 1956 ASSESSMENT STALIN HAD INCORRECTLY MAGNIFIED CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE USSR, ACCORDING TO THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION INTERPRETATION, STALIN HAD INCORRECTLY UNDERESTIMATED IT.

7. MANY OF THE POLITICAL BATTLES IN THE CHINESE LEADERSHIP SINCE MAO'S DEATH, OF COURSE, HAVE BEEN OVER THE VALIDITY OF MAO'S "CONTINUING THE REVOLUTION" THESIS, AND THE REFORM GROUP LED BY DENG XIAOPING HAS LED THE WAY IN ATTEMPTING TO OVERTHROW THE THEORY AND RESTORE THE 1956 EIGHTH PARTY CONGRESS LINE ON THE ROLE OF CLASS STRUGGLE IN SOCIALIST SOCIETY AS

THE BASIS FOR HIS UNITED FRONT APPROACH TO MODERNIZATION. THE MAOIST VIEW WAS ENSHRINED BY HUA GUOFENG IN A MAJOR ARTICLE ON MAY DAY 1977 AS MAO'S GREATEST CONTRIBUTION TO MARXIST-LENINIST THEORY AND AGAIN IN THE 1977 PARTY CONSTITUTION AS PART OF THE CCP'S GENERAL TASK, WHICH STATED THAT POLITICAL REVOLUTIONS LIKE THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION "WILL BE CARRIED OUT MANY TIMES IN THE FUTURE." DENG SUCCESSFULLY LAID THE GROUNDWORK FOR OVERTHROWING MAO'S THESIS, HOWEVER, AT THE THIRD PLENUM IN LATE 1978. THE PLENUM COMMUNIQUE SAID IN LANGUAGE REMINISCENT OF LIU'S 1956 CONGRESS REPORT THAT "THE LARGE-SCALE STRUGGLES OF A MASS CHARACTER HAVE IN THE MAIN COME TO AN END" AS CHINA SHIFTS THE FOCUS OF ITS WORK TO SOCIALIST MODERNIZATION WITHIN A FRAMEWORK OF SOCIALIST LAW. DENG ACHIEVED COMPLETE VICTORY ON THIS SCORE ONLY WITH THE RECENT SIXTH PLENUM, WHERE THE PARTY'S HISTORY RESOLUTION EXPLICITLY STATED THAT MAO'S "CONTINUING THE REVOLUTION" THESIS WAS BASED ON AN ERRONEOUS ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION IN CHINA AND THAT THE EIGHTH CCP CONGRESS HAD PROVIDED A CORRECT ASSESSMENT.

8. THE REVERSION IN THE PARTY'S LINE BACK TO THE EIGHTH CONGRESS VIEW ON CLASS STRUGGLE HAS NATURALLY NECESSITATED A CORRESPONDING CHANGE IN VIEWPOINT ON STALIN, AND PRESS MATERIAL SINCE THE THIRD PLENUM HAS BEGUN TO DO THAT. BECAUSE THE ISSUE OF CLASS STRUGGLE CONTINUED TO BE CONTENTIOUS AFTER THE 1978 THIRD PLENUM--CLASS STRUGGLE WAS SECONDARY, BUT HOW SECONDARY REMAINED UNCLEAR IN VIEW OF PHENOMENA LIKE THE BEIJING WALL DISSIDENT MOVEMENT IN 1979--SUCH ASSESSMENTS OF STALIN WERE VERY TENTATIVE. IN FACT, ONE ARTICLE, APPEARING IN THE 22 AUGUST 1979 GUANGMING DAILY, ASSERTED THAT BOTH THE 1956 ASSESSMENT AND THE MAOIST ASSESSMENT OF LATER

YEARS WERE "CORRECT." CHEN WEIDA'S DECISIVENESS ON THE ISSUE--"COMRADE MAO ZEDONG CRITICIZED STALIN FOR MAGNIFYING THE CLASS STRUGGLE"--SEEMS TO US TO REFLECT THE RESOLUTION OF THESE UNCERTAINTIES BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE SIXTH PLENUM'S HISTORICAL RESOLUTION ON MAO AND HIS IDEAS OF HIS LATER YEARS.

9. BECAUSE MAO'S "CONTINUING THE REVOLUTION" THESIS WAS FORMULATED IN THE CONTEXT OF BOTH HIS DIFFERENCES WITH THE CCP LEADERSHIP IN THE EARLY 1960'S AND WITH THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP OF THE SAME TIME, DENG XIAOPING HAS FACED THE PROBLEM OF REJUSTIFYING THE APPROPRIATENESS OF MAO'S CRITIQUE OF THE SOVIET UNION UNDER KHRUSHCHEV WHILE OVERTHROWING THE LEGITIMACY OF MAO'S CRITIQUE OF THE CCP LEADERSHIP. ESSENTIALLY DENG HAS BEEN ATTEMPTING TO REHABILITATE "CHINA'S KHRUSHCHEV" AT HOME WITHOUT REHABILITATING THE SOVIET KHRUSHCHEV IN SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS. ACCORDINGLY, "REVISIONISM" DROPPED OUT OF USAGE AS APPLIED TO THE SOVIET UNION IN LATE 1978, AS DENG WAS WINNING CENTRAL COMMITTEE ENDORSEMENT FOR THE 1956 EIGHTH PARTY CONGRESS LINE ON CLASS STRUGGLE AT THE THIRD PLENUM, AND AUTHORITATIVE CHINESE STATEMENTS HAVE GRADUALLY REDEFINED "REVISIONISM" ACCORDING TO CURRENT ANTAGONISMS TOWARD MOSCOW. YE JIANYING'S 1979 NATIONAL DAY SPEECH THUS DEFINED REVISIONISM AS THE PRACTICE OF "SOCIAL-FASCISM AT HOME AND HEGEMONISM ABROAD." THE SIXTH PLENUM'S HISTORY RESOLUTION UPHELD THE CORRECTNESS OF MAO'S "JUST STRUGGLE" AGAINST KHRUSHCHEV AND THE SOVIET UNION, BUT IT REDEFINED THIS AS A STRUGGLE AGAINST SOVIET "BIG NATION CHAUVINISM"--A CHARACTERIZATION THAT ACCORDS BOTH WITH CHINESE STATEMENTS ON THE NATURE OF THE CCP-CPSU DIFFERENCES EARLY IN THE SPLIT AND WITH CURRENT ATTITUDES TOWARD MOSCOW AS "HEGEMONIST" AND

"SOCIAL-IMPERIALIST." ACCORDINGLY, WE SEE NO GROUNDS FOR SUSPECTING THAT THESE CHANGED VIEWS ON STALIN ARE EARLY SIGNALS IN ANY KIND OF PRC OVERTURE TO THE USSR. NOR ARE THEY EVEN INTENDED BY SOME IN CHINA TO IMPLY A GROWING CONVERGENCE OF CHINESE AND SOVIET IDEOLOGICAL VIEWPOINTS HINTING AT A COMMON ASSESSMENT OF STALIN. PREVAILING COMMENTARY IN GENERAL IN THIS REGARD WOULD SEEM TO SUGGEST QUITE THE OPPOSITE, DESPITE THE OBJECTIVE SIMILARITY OF VIEWS ON WHAT CONSTITUTES SOCIALISM AND ITS TASKS THESE DAYS.

10. OTHER ASPECTS OF RECENT, EXPLICIT CHINESE CRITICISM OF STALIN SEEM QUITE CONSISTENT WITH TRADITIONAL PRC VIEWS. THE 1956 PEOPLE'S DAILY ARTICLES, FOR EXAMPLE, ALSO CRITICIZED STALIN FOR HIS TACTICS IN DEALING WITH FOREIGN COMMUNIST PARTIES, PARTICULARLY THE CCP IN THE 1920'S THROUGH 1940'S, AND FOR HIS RUSSIAN CHAUVINISM. THESE THEMES WERE REITERATED ON OCCASION EVEN THROUGH THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION YEARS, AND REPEATED AS RECENTLY AS LAST MONTH IN RED FLAG (NO. 17, PAGE 24.)

11. HAVING SAID ALL THIS, WE WOULD LIKE TO ADD THAT WE CONCUR STRONGLY IN THE EMBASSY'S ASSESSMENT OF THE POLITICAL IMPORT OF LIU KEMING'S VIEWS CONTAINED IN REF EMBASSY CABLES. WE HAVE SEEN ARTICLES IN ECONOMIC JOURNALS LIKE SHIJIE JINGJI AND IN SOME OF THE PROVINCIAL ACADEMIC JOURNALS SINCE MID-1979 DISCUSSING THE MERITS AND FAULTS OF THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN STALIN'S 1952 "ESSAY" EMERGING FROM THE 19TH CPSU CONGRESS ENTITLED "ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF SOCIALISM IN THE USSR." THESE DISCUSSIONS HAVE SEEMED THE POINT OF DEPARTURE FOR THE CONTROVERSY BEGUN AROUND THAT TIME OVER THE "AIMS OF SOCIALIST PRODUCTION"--A DEBATE RELATED

TO THE REORIENTATION OF CHINESE INDUSTRY TOWARD CONSUMER PRODUCTION AND AWAY FROM ONE-SIDED STRESS ON ACCUMULATION. OTHER ARTICLES HAVE SEEMED TO IMPLY A REINTERPRETATION OF SOVIET HISTORY'S FIRST FEW DECADES, STRESSING IN PARTICULAR (FOR OBVIOUS REASONS IN VIEW OF CHINA'S CURRENT READJUSTMENT EFFORT) THE "NEW ECONOMIC PLAN" PERIOD. THESE REINTERPRETATIONS HAVE SEEMED TO POINT IN THE DIRECTION OF LIU KEMING'S REFORM-MINDED ANALYSIS OF SOVIET ECONOMIC HISTORY, AS THE EMBASSY HAS SAID, BUT CERTAINLY FALL SHORT OF HIS VIEWS SO FAR. WE HAVE HAD ON THE BOOKS HERE FOR SOME TIME PLANS TO DO A LONG ANALYSIS REPORT ON CHINESE TREATMENT OF THE SOVIET UNION FROM THIS REFORMIST PERSPECTIVE--INCLUDING THE DISCUSSION ABOVE ON CLASS STRUGGLE AND ON ECONOMIC STRATEGY. THE REPORT WILL SPELL OUT THE IMPLICATIONS OF PRC VIEWS OF THE USSR FOR CHINA'S DOMESTIC POLITICS, SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS, AND CHINESE ATTITUDES TOWARD FRATERNAL COMMUNIST PARTIES IN GENERAL. WITH ANY LUCK, IT WILL EMERGE WITHIN THE NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS. REGARDS TO ALL.



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